

Some things to know about jury duty

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Who gets called? U.S. citizens at least 18 years old and residents of the court district for which they are summoned. The jury pool for each court comes from a list of licensed drivers and state ID card holders in its district. No felons. You can be called for duty more than once, but you cannot serve on a jury more than once in a 12-month period. If you are over 70, you can ask for an age exemption from jury service.

What's required? Jurors must "be able to communicate in the English language" and "be physically and mentally able to carry out the functions of a juror."

What does it pay? Under Michigan law, jurors receive not less than \$25 per day and \$12.50 per half day for the first day of service. For each day after that, jurors receive not less than \$40 per day and \$20 per half day. Jurors also get 10 cents a mile for their trips to and from court. If you report for duty but do not get on a jury, you are paid for the day.

What if you don't show up? You can be held in contempt of court, fined or even jailed.

What about work? By law, an employer cannot fire or discipline or threaten such action against an employee who is summoned for jury duty or picked for a jury, even if it is a long trial. Nor can employers force a worker to go beyond normal hours to make up for time lost on jury service. These are potential misdemeanors that could place the employer in contempt of court.

What's an acceptable reason to be excused? That's up to the court, but there are a number of grounds on which an excuse or postponement may be granted. "Hardship" is one, and that could include lack of transportation, excessive travel, extreme financial burden, undue risk to physical property, being over 70, if your absence from your normal routine would affect the care of another or pose a risk to public health or safety. A request for a job-related exemption requires a letter from the employer. A request for a medical-related exemption requires a letter from a doctor. Full-time students who believe that jury service will conflict with their classes must submit a copy of their schedule.

Can you talk about a case afterward? Once the judge discharges you from service, there are no restrictions. You don't have to talk, but attorneys often want to know what went on and in a high-profile case, the media will, too.

Compiled with the help of Marcia McBrien, public information officer, Michigan Supreme Court

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